

August 27, 2020

City of Lansing
Office of the City Clerk
124 W Michigan Avenue
9th Floor of City Hall
Lansing, MI 48933

To whom it may concern:

I am pleased to inform you that the Center for Tech and Civic Life (“CTCL”) has decided to award you a grant to support the work of the City of Lansing.

The following is a description of the grant:

AMOUNT OF GRANT: Four hundred forty-three thousand, seven hundred forty-two (USD \$443,742).

PURPOSE: The grant funds must be used exclusively for the public purpose of planning and operationalizing safe and secure election administration in the City of Lansing in accordance with the attached Lansing Safe Voting Plan 2020

Before we transmit these funds, we ask that you sign this agreement promising to use the grant funds in compliance with United States tax laws. Specifically, by signing this letter you agree to the following:

1. The City of Lansing is a local government unit or political subdivision in the meaning of 26 USC 170(c)(1).

2. This grant shall be used *only* for the public purpose described above, and for no other purposes.
3. The City of Lansing shall not use any part of this grant to give a grant to another organization unless CTCL agrees to the specific grant in writing.
4. The City of Lansing has produced a plan for safe and secure election administration in 2020, including an assessment of election administration needs, budget estimates for such assessment, and an assessment of the impact of the plan on voters. This plan is attached to this agreement. The City shall expend the amount of this grant for purposes contained in this plan by December 31, 2020.
5. The City of Lansing shall produce a report documenting how this grant has been expended in support of the activities described in paragraph 4. This report shall be written and sent to CTCL by January 31, 2021 or in any other format approved by CTCL.
6. The City of Lansing shall not reduce the budget of the City Clerk of Lansing ("the Clerk") or fail to appropriate or provide previously budgeted funds to the Clerk for the term of this grant. Any amount reduced or not provided in contravention of this paragraph shall be repaid to CTCL up to the total amount of this grant.
7. CTCL may discontinue, modify, withhold part of, or ask for the return all or part of the grant funds if it determines, in its sole judgment, that (a) any of the above conditions have not been met or (b) it must do so to comply with applicable laws or regulations.
8. The grant project period of June 15, 2020 through December 31, 2020 represents the dates between which covered costs may be applied to the grant.

Your acceptance of these agreements should be indicated below. Please have an authorized representative of The City of Lansing sign below, and return a scanned copy of this letter to us by email at grants@techandcivicliflife.org

On behalf of CTCL, I extend my best wishes in your work.

Sincerely,

Tiana Epps Johnson
Executive Director



CENTER FOR TECH & CIVIC LIFE

HELLO@TECHANDCIVICLIFE.ORG

Center for Tech and Civic Life

CITY OF LANSING

A Michigan Municipal Corporation

By: _____

Title: _____

Date: _____



CENTER FOR TECH & CIVIC LIFE

HELLO@TECHANDCIVICLIFE.ORG

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City of Lansing, Michigan
Safe Voting Plan Application
To Center for Technology and Civic Life

Mayor Andy Schor and City Clerk Chris Swope are working collaboratively on the November 2020 election to: reduce the risk of exposure to coronavirus for our residents as well as our election staff and poll workers; identify best practices for safe and healthy voting; innovate to efficiently and effectively educate our residents about how to exercise their right to vote during this time of COVID-19; be intentional and strategic in helping historically disenfranchised residents and communities safely vote during unprecedented times; and, above all, ensure the right to healthy voting in our dense and diverse communities.

Michigan 2020 Election Administration Climate

Michigan municipalities are faced with conducting two expensive elections in November. First, Michigan election law requires every precinct to be open on election day for in-person voting regardless of the number of voters who cast ballots by mail. Staffing Lansing's 45 precincts has historically been the largest election expense. Second, the expected skyrocketing volume of mail ballots driven by the COVID-19 pandemic will incur costs for staffing and equipment that will rival typical election day expenses.

Michigan election officials typically conduct presidential elections with 25 – 30% of the voters casting ballots by mail and 70 – 75% casting them in-person on election day. It now appears that mail balloting may account for 65 – 70% of the turnout. This trend is breaking municipal election budgets beginning with the higher-than-expected mail turnout in the August Primary that will continue through the November General Election.

Federal CARES ACT funding does not begin to meet the need of cash-strapped municipal election budgets. These funds disbursed by the Secretary of State have been used to issue August Primary mail ballot applications to all voters and to provide PPE and equipment to election officials. Both Lansing and Michigan's budgets have been hard hit by the resulting economic downturn making additional funding of the city's election preparations unlikely.

There are many challenges to opening polling places in a pandemic and processing a historically high volume of mail ballots. The time that remains between now and the November Election provides an opportunity to plan for the highest possible voter turnouts in the safest possible ways.

Supplemental Election Administration Needs for 2020

Through careful analysis, we have concluded that crucial, supplemental programs will assist Lansing voters in fully participating in the presidential election. We are requesting a **\$443,742** grant to meet Lansing's election administration needs for the remainder of this year as specified in the four strategic recommendations.

Recommendation I: Encourage and Increase Absentee Voting (By Mail and Early, In-Person)

1. Provide assistance to help voters safely request absentee ballots.
2. Expand in-person early voting opportunities.

3. Utilize secure drop-boxes to facilitate return of absentee ballots.
4. Deploy additional technology and resources to expedite and improve accuracy of mail ballot process

Recommendation II: Ensure Safe Election Day Voting

Recommendation III: Dramatically Expand Strategic Voter Education & Outreach Efforts

Recommendation IV: Launch Poll Worker Recruitment & Training.

Recommendation I: Encourage and Increase Absentee Voting (By Mail and Early, In-Person)

Overview of Mail Voting in Michigan

In 2018 Michigan voters amended the state constitution to provide a series of voting rights to Michigan citizens. Central to the amendment is no reason absentee voting, which is a significant change that eliminated the reasons that entitled a voter to vote absentee. Voters must still apply by application to receive an absentee ballot and they may request both a primary ballot and a general election ballot with a single request, which is commonly referred to as a 'dual' application. Further, the amendment entitles citizens who are not registered by the 15th day before the election to register in-person in a clerk's office during the 14 days prior to an election and on election day – Michigan now has Election Day Registration.

Under the amendment election officials have authority to add satellite offices to register voters and issue absentee ballots. The legislative body of the jurisdiction must approve any satellite office under Michigan election law. All satellite offices must be published at least 30 days before an election.

Historically, absentee voting has been costly as clerks must send applications to voters, receive and verify the completed applications, issue and mail absentee ballots, receive voted ballots and verify the voters' signatures, and finally tabulate ballots beginning on election day. Each of these processes must still be done under mail balloting, requiring a significant number of staff and, as the volume increases, more sophisticated equipment to efficiently process the large amount of paperwork.

The back and forth nature of Michigan's mail balloting processes places a heavy burden on voters to learn how to apply for a mail ballot, be aware of the election calendar and apply for a ballot early enough to receive, vote and return the ballot by election day and understand the delays built into the United State Postal Service delivery timelines.

In the 2016 November Presidential Election, Lansing received 11,028 mail ballots (23% of total vote). Projections are that between 38,500 and 45,000 mail ballots will be received in November. In fact, Lansing exceeded the 2016 General Election total of mail ballots in the August primary this year.

To avoid the city clerk's office being inundated with applications to the point of compromising the processing of applications and ballots, we require the grant resources to facilitate our proposals outlined below.

Lansing will assist as many residents as possible with casting ballots before Election Day, serving as the great opportunity to mitigate the spread of COVID-19 in our community. We have identified four distinct strategies to help voters overcome barriers to successful mail voting.

1. Provide assistance to voters with mail ballot requests

Directly mail applications to all voters in Lansing who did not request a dual application in the August primary. This is the best way to start the mail balloting process for voters who did not return a 'dual' application in the primary. Placing an application in the hands of voters early in the process results in earlier filing of the applications for a mail election. Those voters who did submit a dual application with automatically receive a ballot for the General Election. Mailing to Lansing voters: **\$13,624**.

Subtotal: \$13,624

2. Expand in-person early mail voting opportunities

Currently, the city is using the main office downtown to take mail ballot applications, issue mail applications and receive voted mail ballots. The clerk will expand pre-election voting sites to the clerk's Election Unit on South Washington Avenue and the Alfreda Schmidt Southside Community Center on Wise Road. The value of additional satellite offices is making early mail voting more accessible to a larger portion of Lansing's electorate. Voters gain the convenience of selecting the location and the time they would like to cast their ballot. Coupled with drop boxes in the next strategy, satellite offices are full-service sites for registering to vote, applying for mail ballots and delivering voted mail ballots.

The South Washington satellite will be open for 40 days prior to the election. Two full-time contract employees are necessary: **\$14,400**. The Alfreda Schmidt satellite will be open October 19 through 30. Two early voting assistants are necessary: **\$7,200**.

Extended and weekend hours are important to providing voters flexible registration and voting hours. The South Washington satellite will maintain hours each Saturday in October, except October 31, from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m., requiring staffing resources: **\$2,400**. On Saturday, October 31 and Sunday, November 1 the South Washington satellite will maintain hours from 10 a.m. to 10 p.m., requiring staffing resources: **\$5,600**. Beginning September 30, the South Washington Election Unit will be open until 7 p.m. on Wednesdays, requiring staffing resources: **\$1,200**.

Subtotal: \$30,800

3. Utilize secure drop-boxes to facilitate return of absentee

Lansing voters, like those across Michigan, will be encouraged to return their mail ballots in-person rather than using USPS, particularly in the last two weeks before the election. USPS is going to be stressed with increased election related mail, as evidenced by recent announcements that some service

deterioration is going to occur. Drop boxes, especially drive through boxes, allow voters to easily drop off their voted ballots regardless of where they happen to be in the city.

A drop box and surveillance camera costs \$2,500 and an additional \$1,000 installation costs. Ten additional boxes will place a box within one mile of each voter: **\$26,000**.

An added security measure is a courier to collect ballots from the boxes each day and deliver ballots that should have been sent to surrounding jurisdictions: **\$4,400**.

Subtotal: \$30,400

4. Deploy additional technology and resources to expedite and improve accuracy of mail ballot process

The expected increase in volume of mail ballots requires additional staff to process voter registration applications and mail ballot application. Two data entry specialists to work through the November election: **\$16,200**. A select group of poll workers are activated to assist in preparing ballots for mailing: **\$5,000**. Also, the volume requires significant overtime to get the applications process and ballot into the mail: **\$20,000**.

With an extremely large increase in the volume of mail ballots, the city requires a commensurate increase in tabulation capacity to complete the count in a reasonable time after the polls close on November 3. Lansing has the Dominion voting system and requires three high-speed tabulators and an adjudication system for counting mail ballots: \$129,078 minus \$25,000 from Department of State - **\$104,078**.

To accommodate the increase mail ballot processing, the clerk will need to purchase or rent additional tables, chairs, ballot bags, shelving units and envelope counters: **\$17,740**.

Subtotal: \$163,018

Recommendation II: Ensure Safe Election Day Voting

Election day workers who administer elections in the 45 precincts are often referred to as the frontline or face of democracy. These workers are asked to work a very long day for a small stipend. They are often referred to as volunteers. This year they face the hazard of COVID-19 as they serve hundreds of voters throughout the day. The average age of our poll workers is in the late 60s or early 70s, an age group considered at high risk to the virus. Lansing is having similar experience as communities across the nation of large numbers of our older workers declining to work this election year. And yet the City of Lansing is committed to opening the same number precincts on election day that the city has opened in recent years. To meet that commitment, the city must enhance its recruitment and retention strategy, including by seeking workers who have not served as poll workers in the past by offering a financial incentive.

There will be 600 poll workers, some who work half day shifts. Incentive pay for 400 full day workers at \$50 - \$40,000 and 200 half day workers at \$50 - \$10,000: **\$50,000**. Three contract employees who interact with the public and handle processing mail ballots require incentive pay of \$5 per hour for nine weeks: **\$5,400**.

Avoiding congestion and long lines are essential objectives during the COVID-19 pandemic. Voting is no exception, as the clerk request additional laptops so that every precinct may by dual electronic poll books. Further, a number of laptops are more than ten years old. With two laptops in each precinct, voters will be processed faster: **\$12,000**.

Early this year the clerk piloted a Google web form that allows precinct captains to quickly report issues to the main office. Also, in larger precinct and in polling places with more than one precinct, poll workers 'work-the-line- to ensure voters are in the correct precinct. Eight tablets are requested: **\$8,500**.

Back-up precinct tabulators are essential to keep precincts in full operations should a tabulator fail on election day. With back-ups lines will not form due to delays: **\$8,500**.

Based on two citywide elections this year, the clerk estimates a significant workload increase due to Same Day Registration and Election Day Registration. The main office needs additional workstations to facilitate Same Day Registration: **\$2,200**.

PPE and additional supplies to prevent the spread of COVID-19 are necessary for November. The Department of State is providing a portion of the needs. The city's portion of the PPE cost: **\$14,300**. Also, due to reluctance to house events open to the public, it is necessary for the clerk to provide sanitizing services to several of the sites housing Lansing's precincts: **\$4,000**.

Subtotal: \$104,900

Recommendation III: Dramatically Expand Strategic Voter Education & Outreach Efforts.

As noted above, the voters play a critical role to a successfully administered election in November. By applying early for mail ballots, voters will distribute the city clerk's workload across September and October. Normally, voters wait until early to mid-October to apply for a mail ballot, which jams up the process as applications flood the clerk's office, resulting in longer turnaround times before ballots are issued. To avoid this, voters will be encouraged through a variety of outreach to apply early and vote early.

The clerk's voter outreach and education plan encouraging mail balloting will utilize earned media, paid print media, and paid messaging and advertising on social media. The public outreach will direct voters to use the satellite offices as means of voting early where election workers will review the applications and return ballot envelopes to make sure they are complete. The effort will also inform voters of the drop box locations and important steps to ensure their ballot will be counted. The outreach plan will seek new poll workers and encourage under-registered communities to get registered for the election. Digital ads will be placed on Instagram, TikTok, Facebook, YouTube, and Twitter: **\$20,000**.

Text messages and robo-call reminders are very useful tools to expand mail voting. Given the number of voters, these communications will save time and money compared to direct mail. Positive feedback has been received for mass communications via email: **\$3,000**. To reach an even larger audience, the clerk is planning to purchase 20 billboards beginning seven weeks before the election and running through election day with the outreach messages: **\$23,700**.

Voters also must be informed to avoid errors such as forgetting to sign applications and return ballot envelopes and to affix their signatures as they appear on their driver license or state ID. Many people today sign credit card receipts with an informal signature that does not match their formal signature used on official documents. These errors will invalidate ballots. Department of Elections staff will attempt to contact voters making these errors; however, time is usually in short supply. Mailing postcards shortly after ballots are issued will inform voters of this essential information to avoid voiding the ballot. Well-designed postcards will carry these messages: **\$8,600**.

Voter registration cards are not required to vote; however, many voters continue to ask whether they are required and believe that they cannot vote without one. The clerk would like to mail voter registration cards to all voters to eliminate a deterrent to voting. This will increase voter confidence as similar mailing have in the past: **\$8,500**.

To raise awareness of the early voting option, the clerk's office will co-host a food truck event on October 31 with the League of Women Voters, A Philip Randolph Institute, the Lansing Clergy Forum and other non-profit organizations: **\$10,000**.

Subtotal \$73,800.

Recommendation IV: Launch Poll Worker Recruitment & Training

Recruiting inspectors is a continuing challenge. An aggressive campaign is necessary with businesses in Lansing to recruit their employees to administer election on election day both in the precincts and the counting boards. There has been some success in this area in previous elections. An 'All Hands on Deck' call is necessary to meet the minimum requirements to administer the November election. This will require outreach by officials beyond the clerk's office.

The clerk office must conduct 3-hour training sessions for new poll workers with reduced class size to accommodate safe learning. Two staff members conduct the training: **\$15,000**. Specialized training in operating the e-pollbook requires 2-hour hands-on the computer program. Chairperson training requires a 6-hour training course with hands-on with voting equipment: **\$10,000**.

Video training is versatile highlighting subject areas requiring more attention such as a series on conducting an election during the pandemic. The next training video will focus on refreshing experienced workers on the e-pollbook: **\$2,200**.

Subtotal: \$27,200

TOTAL REQUESTED RESOURCES: \$443,742